

Differentiated Instruction: Description of Terms

In the TDSB approach to Differentiated Instruction, we recognize that our students are **individuals** whose culture, race/ethnicity, language, learning preferences and needs, gender, and life circumstances are key considerations for their success in school. In the TDSB, teachers plan, deliver instruction and assess achievement with students' individual preferences and needs in mind.

General Principles

Respectful Tasks are learning experiences matched to the diverse needs of the student and the life experiences they bring with them to our schools. Tasks that are respectful of the learner will honour the differences among students' readiness levels, areas of interest, and learning profiles.

Quality Curriculum is a non-negotiable component of a differentiated classroom, and requires focusing on what students absolutely need to know, understand, and be able to do by the end of an achievement cycle. Quality curriculum is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.

Flexible Grouping is characterized by the combination of whole group, small group, and independent work. Learners' readiness, interests and learning profiles, based upon their individual preferences, serve as the basis for grouping. Student groups remain flexible because they are responsive to changes in students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Continual Assessment is the on-going the use of pre-, during and post- assessment data on learner readiness, areas of interest, and learning profile. Teachers use these assessments to make appropriate adjustments in curriculum and instruction, and to provide focused interventions for learners who need them.

Building Community requires connectedness, flexibility, choice, mutual respect, fairness, and the consistent expectation that students will grow and succeed. School and classroom procedures operate smoothly within a physical environment that is safe, organized, comfortable, inviting, and reflective of students' interests, strengths, and intelligences.

Student's Needs

Readiness describes the prior learning and attitudes that students bring to new learning. A student's readiness for learning is dynamic, and changes as learning circumstances and situations change. Teachers differentiate by providing learners with an appropriate level of challenge according to their readiness, to enable them to grow in knowledge and skills.

Interest is a predisposition, passion, or curiosity for a topic or skill. Students' motivation for learning is ignited when classroom experiences are designed that address students' interests. Students become engaged when they encounter topics, big ideas and essential questions that are personally meaningful to them.

Learning Profile is the combination of ways in which students best process information and make relevant connections to their learning experiences. The learners' preferences are their preferred ways of processing what is to be learned, including their learning styles, intelligences, and environmental preferences.

Differentiated Practices

Content is the curriculum, or the "what". It is described by or demonstrated through the expectations (the skills, content and strategies the students must learn). It is what students will know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the sequence of teaching and learning.¹

Process is the "how". It is how students will make sense of the content. The process is made up of the strategies and methods that form the sequence of teaching and learning.

Products are the vehicles by which students demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Products are the tools teachers use to assess and evaluate student progress toward, and achievement of, the expectations and content goals.

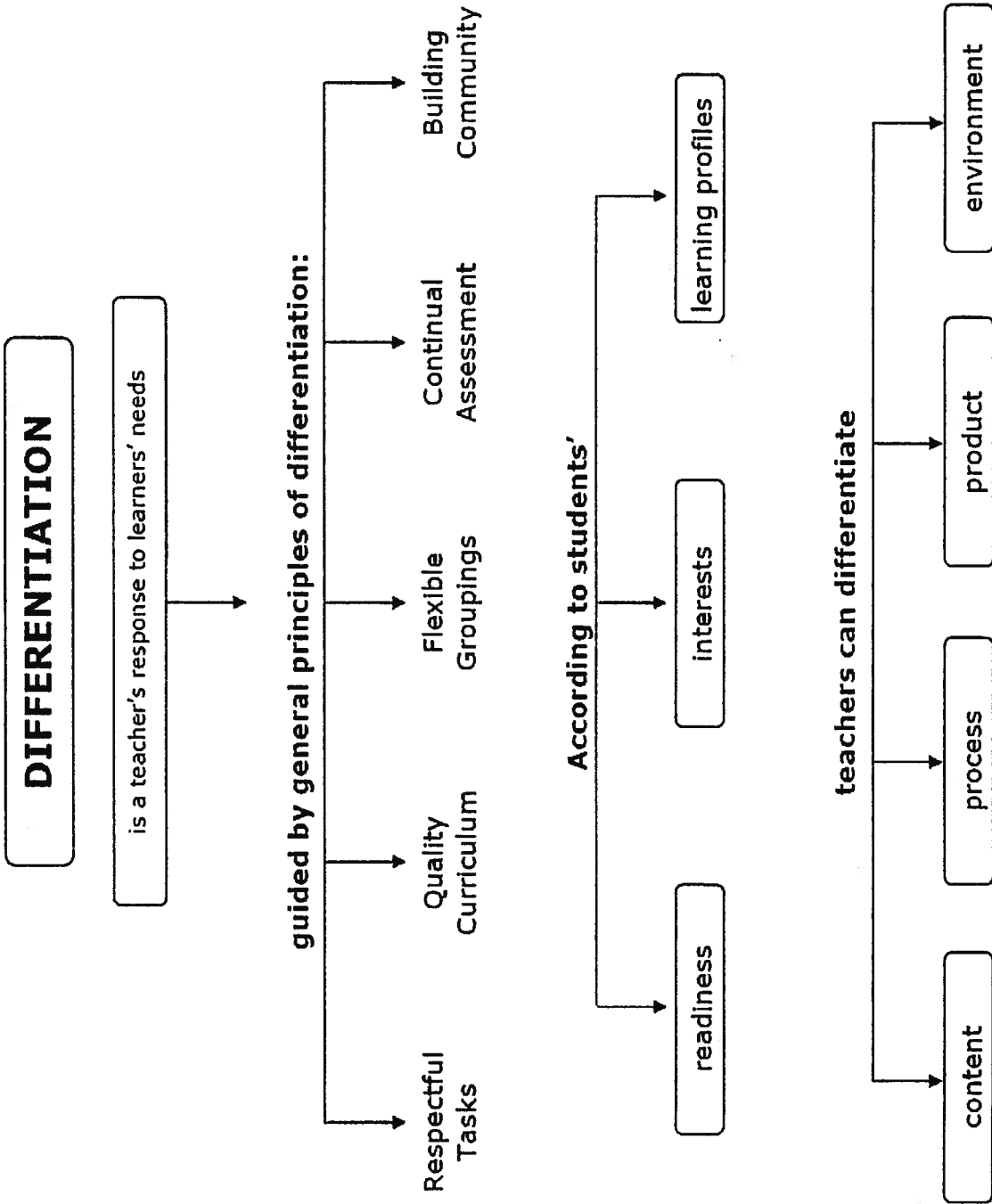
Environment is the physical and psychological "space" in which learning is situated (e.g., desk arrangement; visual displays; access to resources; climate of respect, caring and safety.) Developing a strong community of engaged learners who see their identities and preferences reflected in their learning environment is essential to effective differentiation.

¹Ministry of Education, *Differentiated Instruction Teacher's Guide, Getting to the Core of Teaching and Learning*, October, 2007, p.6. Adapted from Burritt & Hedrick of the Virginia Beach City Public Schools and from *The Differentiated Classroom* by C.A. Tomlinson, 1999, 2001; and from *Start Where They Are*, K. Hume, 2007.



TDSB FRAMEWORK FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

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through a range of instructional and management strategies and structures.

Visit <http://tdsbweb/program> for resources for differentiating instruction